

The Concept of Precariousness: What Definition?

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Abstract—Through this article, we try to give a definition of the concept of precariousness by adopting a historical approach. Indeed, at the beginning the term "precariousness" was adopted in a way that confused poverty or exclusion without distinguishing the meaning of each of these terms. Then, this concept "precariousness" covered two social realities. The first is related to poverty and vulnerability and the second is associated with the different statuses of jobs. In the end, this notion has been developed by producing another a broader concept that is the precariat. This last word comes from the contraction of "precariousness" and "proletariat" to designate a new social class undermined by economic insecurity and the daily anxiety of precariousness.

Keywords—Exclusion, Insecurity, Poverty, precariat, Precariousness, Vulnerability.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of "precariousness" has undergone a historical evolution. Our problem is to project light on this term while seeking to answer the following question: what definition can we assign to precariousness?

Referring to the literature and following the historical evolution of this term "precariousness", we try, in the first section of this article, to advance a definition by history, in its second section, of treating the relation between work and precariousness and in its third section, distinguishing the concept of precariat from precariousness.

II. PRECARIOUSNESS: A TEST OF DEFINITION BY HISTORY

Since the end of the seventies, the term "precariousness" has become commonplace in political discourse in France. The use of the term appeared in the social and medico-social sector in a context characterized by the economic crisis of the early eighties and which generated a massive increase in unemployment in the context of the "new poverty".

Historically, it was in the years following the economic crisis of 1973 that the notion of precariousness appeared. Theoretically, the term "precariousness" can be adopted in a way that confuses poverty or exclusion without making any distinction as to the meaning of each of these terms. According to Lochen Valérie, poverty can be considered relatively or absolutely. Relative, it is treated in terms of

inequalities within a society. Absolutely, poverty means not having some basic opportunities for material well-being and immaterial resources, including knowledge and culture¹.

However, the exclusion is related to the non-realization, or the inadequate realization, of certain rights by individuals, human rights for the Council of Europe, but more generally social rights for the European Union. . Similarly, Join Lambert (1995) proposes to define exclusion based on the non-respect of civil, social and political rights that are declared open to everyone in a given geographical entity.² The term "precariousness" since it appeared, and that was imposed, in the 1990s, in the heart of the scientific, politico-administrative and media fields to make understandable a multi-faceted insecurity and mark an area of social fragility and economy marked by an uncertain relationship in the future³

In France, in 1985, J. Wresinski drew up a report on poverty entitled "Great poverty and economic and social precariousness" in which the author defined precariousness as: The absence of one or more securities, notably that of employment, enabling individuals and families to fulfil their professional, family and social obligations and to enjoy fundamental rights. The resulting insecurity may be more or less extensive and have more or less serious and definitive consequences. It leads to extreme poverty when it affects many areas of life, when it becomes persistent, when it compromises the chances of assuming one's

¹LochenValérie (2013), « under standing social policies, precariousness, poverty, exclusion », pp.269 à 364.

²Jérôme BALLEI(2001). «exclusion: definitions and mechanisms »..Edit. l'Harmattan. p.19

³M.BOUMAZA, E.PIERRU(2007).« from precarious movements to the unification of a cause, contemporary societies » n°65.p.11,.

responsibilities again and regaining one's rights by oneself"⁴

Moreover, Patrick Cingolani explains that: "precariousness, translated into insufficient and random income, is the antechamber of poverty, the beginning of socialization, the impossibility of projects, the beginning of a path where it is possible to pass of nothing, because illness or separation adds to their lot of problems that of monetary difficulties of existence"⁵.

From the sociological point of view, Maryse Bresson has distinguished four interpretations of the term "precariousness"⁶.

- It can cover all the diversity of social situations in a general framework that makes no distinction with poverty and exclusion. In this sense, René Lenoir in his book "The excluded" which speaks of "populations in social difficulties"

- Precariousness can be distinguished from poverty and exclusion. In fact, precariousness applies to populations that are poorly equipped in terms of income, access to employment and education. However, poverty is an additional degree of denouement and exclusion refers to extreme poverty, including lack of housing.

- It can also designate a life trajectory marked by a movement of impoverishment that is to say populations or individuals who have become or are becoming poorer relative to their environment of origin or their standard of living prior.

- Precariousness is ultimately the uncertainty, the instability of a situation in an ever-changing society.

However, it remains to clarify that the term precariousness was often associated with employment and work. In this context, Serge Paugam, "conceives precariousness as a degradation of employment for life. It analyses the consequences of transforming employment contracts into fixed-term contracts"⁷

In the same vein, Henri Eckert, 2010, sees precariousness as "the perception that disseminates a proletarianization of a fraction of the wage-earning, that which has lost some guarantees-related to full employment-or protections-against unemployment, in particular- from which she had benefited until then and the obsession with dependencies in which their new situation plunges them"⁸

III. WORK OR PRECARIOUS JOB?

In the early 1980s, the term precariousness covers two social realities. The first is related to poverty and vulnerability and the second is associated with the different statuses of jobs. Social precariousness or precariousness related to living conditions is questioned in the context of the social situation of households in terms of purchasing power and the financial constraints vis-à-vis compulsory expenditure.

However, precarious employment is linked to new forms of employment called "precarious jobs" related to the instability and uncertainty characterizing employment situations.

According to INSEE, precarious jobs in France include all employment statuses that are not permanent contracts (CDI), such as: temporary employment, fixed-term contracts (CDD), temporary employment learning and contracts aided.

Jean Claude Barbier has remarkably deconstructed the path of the various variations of the term "precariousness", especially when precariousness was closely linked, starting from the 1980s, to the problem of work, with regard to the break-up of the wage-earning system, to the corollary rise of the instability of employment and the multiplication of atypical forms of it.⁹

S. Paugam, 2000, conceives precariousness as a degradation of employment for life. It analyses the consequences of transforming employment contracts into fixed-term contracts¹⁰. In the same way, Paugam distinguished, within the framework of the extension of the notion, between precariousness of the job and precariousness of work. For him, the precariousness of the job corresponds to the incapacity of the employee to anticipate his professional future and to ensure his social protection in a sustainable way, because the new contractual forms of employment are considered according to him as precarious jobs. Whereas job insecurity mainly refers to states or situations where work is made useless, uninteresting and poorly recognized by the employer.¹¹

In the same sense, H. Eckert, 2010, considers precariousness as "the perception generated of a proletarianisation of a fraction of the wage-earning, that which has lost certain guarantees generally linked to full employment or against unemployment, which it had

⁴Wresinski J.(1987). « High poverty and economic and social precariousness » report submitted on behalf of the Economic and Social Council. Official Journal 1987..

⁵Cingolani Patrick, Coll. (2005). « Que Sais-Je ? »(What do I know?), éd. PUF.

⁶Maryse Bresson (2015). « Sociology of precariousness », édition Amond Colin, p.9

⁷S. Paugam, (2000). « the precarious employee: the new forms of professional integration », Paris, édit. Presses universitaires de France

⁸Henri Eckert(2010).« "Precariousness " do you say?, Sociology».

⁹J.C.BARBIER(2005). «Precariousness, a French category facing the test of international comparison », French Review of Sociology, 2005/46-2, pp.351-371.

¹⁰S. Paugam, (2000). « the precarious employee: the new forms of professional integration », edict. University Presses of France.

¹¹idem

benefited until then and the obsession with dependencies in which their new situation plunges them¹².

From the legal point of view, Article L1243-8 of the French Labor Code, mentioned for the first time the term "precariousness" by stating that:

"When, after a fixed-term employment contract, the contractual relations are not pursued by an employment contract of indefinite duration. The employee is entitled, as a supplement to salary, to compensation to compensate for the precariousness of his situation". This is a premium of precariousness that corresponds to an allowance of a minimum of 10% of the total gross remuneration that must be paid to the employee at the end of a fixed-term contract or an interim contract by the employer.

The precariousness of employment generally produces a situation of instability and insecurity for the workers since it periodically generates periods of unemployment. It leads to the disruption of the social and economic life of the employee both physically and materially. However, the precariousness of jobs represents for employers a great advantage in terms of demands and wages.

This situation will lead according to V.HELARDOT, 2005, from the precarisation of employment to the precarious living conditions of workers from the reappearance of new forms of financial vulnerability and poverty, including among people with stable jobs.

The author has stressed the difficulties that can directly influence the conditions and lifestyles (food, housing, clothing,) and disrupt the organization of life in the short and medium term by forcing to live "the day the day" without possibility of projection in the future.¹³

IV. THE NOTION OF PRECARIAT: A CONTRACTION OF "PRECAIOUSNESS" AND "PROLETARIAT"

Over the past three decades, the world of work has undergone a "great transformation" because of the dominance of financial capital in an open and globalized economy characterized by the principle of liberalizing the international market and the constant search for competitiveness at the national level.

On the other hand, and in parallel with this transformation, about two billion additional people added to the global labor market quadrupled a global labor supply. This new situation has put downward pressure on wages in most Western countries, particularly from the implementation of the so-called "labor market flexibility" policies that led to

the birth of insecurity of employment and wages among employees.

In the same direction, we must also add the consequences of the "revolution of technologies and information", they led, without doubt, to profound changes in the labor market and especially through the mechanisms of offshoring. Economy (production and employment) as part of the search for benefits mainly related to prospective costs and profits, this of course results in a further increase in the downward pressure on wages.

It is in this context that Guy Standing (2017), explained that the precariat "is a world reality, the word comes from the contraction of" precariousness "and" proletariat "to designate a new social class undermined by economic insecurity and the daily anxiety of precariousness "¹⁴.

For Robert Castel (2009), the precariat "is a new social phenomenon which, according to him, constitutes the index that edifies the deregulation of work. The institution of precarious labor relations today concerns thousands of people and gives rise to a new social category that of the working poor, that is to say, workers deprived of employment status "¹⁵. The author explained that this deregulation manifests itself in the marginal increase in the status of employment, in work activities that are not. Alternatively, insufficiently, protected by the law. It originates in the fear of unemployment that individuals accept to work under any conditions¹⁶.

V. CONCLUSION

Few literatures have dealt with the concept of precariousness, and many authors are unable to distinguish this concept from other similar concepts such as poverty, vulnerability, exclusion, etc. through this work we have tried to enrich the debate on this concept that is developing day by day by touching several domains and various disciplines.

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¹²Henri Eckert(2010).« "Precariousness" do you say?, Sociology»

¹³Valentine HELARDO T(2005). «Precariousness of work and employment: what resonances in the construction of social experiences».Empan 2005/4(N°60),pp.30à37.

¹⁴Guy Standing(2017). «The precariat: the dangers of a new class, economic insecurity, social anger».édit.de l'opportun, 2017.

¹⁵Robert Castel(2009). « The rise of uncertainties: Work, protections. Status of the individual ». Paris, Seuil, 2009

¹⁶Idem.

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